

Walter Coles House (Old Woodville)
State Route 627 at Junction with 715
Esmont vicinity
Albemarle County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1246

HABS
VA,
2-ESM.V,
2-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HABS
VA,
2-ESMONT,
2-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WALTER COLES HOUSE
(Old Woodville)

HABS No. VA-1246

Location: State Route 627 at junction with State Route 715,
Esmont vicinity, Albemarle County, Virginia

USGS Esmont Quadrangle 1967, Universal Transverse
Mercator coordinates: 17.711410.4191590

Present Owner
and Occupant: Daniel G. VanClief

Present Use: house

Significance: Old Woodville was built in 1796 for Walter Coles
(1772-1854), son of John Coles II of nearby
Enniscorthy (HABS No. VA-1243). Together with
Enniscorthy, Redlands (HABS No. VA-1245), and Tallwood
(HABS No. VA-1244), Old Woodville contributes to the
understanding of the history of the Coles family,
long-time Virginia residents.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of construction: 1796 (date from a chimney brick)
2. Original and subsequent owners:

1808 - Albemarle County Will Book (ACWB) 4-298: John Coles'
will of 1798 confirms his previous gift of Woodville to his
eldest son, Walter.

1853 - ACWB 23-37: Walter Coles left that part of his estate on
which the dwelling was situated to his son, Walter Coles.

1856 - Goochland County Will Book: Son, Walter Coles, left the
dwelling to his wife, Ann Coles.

1886 - Albemarle County Deed Book (ACDB) 87-120: Ann Coles to
Charles P. Shaw, who changed the name to "Mavesyn."

1892 - ACDB 97-435: Name changed to Old Woodville because "New
Woodville" had been built nearby in 1892.

1902 - ACDB 124-155: Charles P. Shaw conveyed the property to
John Guthrie Hopkins, who built Guthrie Hall near Esmont.

1903 - ACDB 127-45: John Guthrie Hopkins to Thomas B. Coles, sone of last owners, Walter and Ann Coles.

1910 - ACDB 143-291: Thomas B. Coles to Mrs. Francis Cromwell Stevenson.

1927 - ACDB 197-173: Mrs. Francis Cromwell Stevenson to A. McFarlane.

1939 - ACDB 244-256: A. McFarlane to R.A. VanClief.

1945 - ACWB 37-356: R.A. VanClief to son, Danny VanClief.

3. Original plans and construction: The Mutual Assurance Society record of 1799 shows a 36' x 34' two-story frame house underpinned with stone and having small porches on the north and south with chimneys on the gable ends. The dwelling was valued at \$2300 and had a barn.
 4. Alterations and additions: The Mutual Assurance Society record of 1810 shows that a 6' x 12' porch was added on the west, and the porches on the north and south measured 6' x 10.' An early photo shows a dormerless roof and a three-bay, one-story porch over the entire south facade. A later photo shows a two-story Victorian bay on the west, an addition to the 1832 east wing, and Chippendale railings on a three-bay north porch. The dining room wing was built by Walter Coles in 1832. The present owner, Daniel G. VanClief, former member of the House of Delegates of the Virginia General Assembly, added the east wing and the west kitchen in 1948 and the enclosed north porch later.
- B. Historical Context: Old Woodville was built in 1796 for John Coles II's (1754-1808) eldest son, Walter Coles (1772-1854). The date is said to have been on a chimney brick that not only confirmed the date but also had the builder's initials on it.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Woodville is a three-bay, two-story frame house with a typical Georgian plan of double pile and exterior gable end chimneys. It may originally have had a center stair passage but no longer does.
2. Condition of fabric: The house is maintained in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Foundations: The 3' high cellar is made of stone on both the 1796 and 1832 portions. Window sash in the cellar walls are new.

2. Walls: The entire building is sheathed in twentieth century horizontal weatherboards.
3. Chimneys: Six exterior gable end brick chimneys service the many fireplaces. In the 1796 portion, the northeast, southeast, and southwest chimneys are Flemish bond, while the northwest one is seven course American bond. Most have been rebuilt. The 1948 east wing contains a Flemish bond chimney as well as a Flemish bond cellar wall. On the 1796 portion between the western chimneys, there is evidence of a chimney pent with shed roof on the second floor.
4. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Both exterior doors on the 1796 portion have been widened to accommodate six horizontally panelled Dutch doors with fake strap hinges. There's a bulkhead on the south facade of the 1832 wing.
 - b. Windows: The double-hung windows with nine-over-nine sash are twentieth century as are the six-over-six dormers with hipped roofs. The 1832 kitchen wing contains nine-over-nine windows with a six-over-six one on the north facade. This latter window appears to have been nine-over-nine in an early photo and was obviously made narrower to accommodate the later interior stair behind it. Green exterior lowered blinds flank the windows.
5. Roof: The gable roof is slate with snow eagles on it. An early photo indicates that a modillion cornice terminated the roof on the north facade.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Cellar: The cellar has been drastically altered. However, a wooden post in the 1796 portion supports a wooden shear block with angled ends.
2. First floor:
 - a. Entrance room: floor - 2 1/2" wide wooden floor boards running in a north-south direction; base - 6 1/2" wooden baseboards; wainscot - wood panelling, 2' 6 3/4" to top of 5 1/2" high wooden chair rail, which becomes the window sill; walls - plaster; cornice - wood with reeding; ceiling - plaster; ceiling height - 10' 8"; fireplace - 5' 2" to top of mantel shelf, 3' 9" opening width, reeding in cornice and frieze end block, plain center frieze, plain architrave, hexagonal tiles in hearth; stair - flush, horizontal wood paneling, up to 1' 1" wide, with bead on stairwell wall; doors - 3' 9" Dutch front door with six

horizontal panels and fake strap hinges; six-panel door to dining wing; windows - two nine-over-nine double-hung windows.

- b. Southwest parlor: floor - 2 1/2" wide wooden floor boards running in a north-south direction; base, wainscot, chair rail, cornice, walls, ceiling - same as entrance room; ceiling height - 10' 8"; fireplace - 5' 6" to top of mantel shelf, 3' 2" opening width, reeded cornice and frieze, reeded end blocks and center block, same tile hearth as in entrance room; doors - 3' 9" wide Dutch door to porch with six horizontal panels and fake strap hinges, three-panel double doors to library and entrance room - there is evidence that an opening existed in the west wall to the north of the fireplace; windows - two nine-over-nine double hung windows.
- c. Southeast library: floor - 6" wide wooden floor boards running in an east-west direction; cornice - double rows of alternating dentils; fireplace - 4' 8" to top of mantel shelf, 3' 2" wide opening, plain frieze with center block but no end blocks, brick hearth; windows - 2' 6" to top of window sill, two nine-over-nine double hung windows.
- d. Passage: floor - new wooden floor boards running in a north-south direction; wainscot - 2' 7 1/2" to top of chair rail with wood paneling below.
- e. Northeast study: floor - new wooden floor boards running in a north-south direction; wainscot - 2' 6 1/2" to top of chair rail with wood paneling below; walls and ceiling - plaster; fireplace - 4' 7 1/4" to top of mantel shelf, 2' 5" opening width, simple entablature with three diaper motifs in frieze.
- f. Hyphen passage: floor - 2 1/2" wide wooden floor boards running in a north-south direction; wainscot - 2' 6 1/4" to top of chair rail which extends 2' 8 1/4" horizontally to form what originally might have been a chimney pent - a 3' 6" deep arch above the chair rail between the two chimney stacks also relates to the chair rail below - wood wainscot below chair rail; walls - wallpaper over plaster; doors - doors to down stair and bath have three-pane transoms above.
- g. Dining room (1832 wing): floor - 2 1/2" wide wooden floor boards running in a north-south direction; base - 6" high wooden baseboard; wainscot - wood paneling, 2' 7 1/4" to top of 5 1/2" high chair rail, which becomes the window sill; walls - wallpaper over plaster; cornice - same as entrance room; ceiling - plaster; fireplace - 5' 1" to top of mantel shelf, 2' 10" opening width, plain frieze with

elliptical patera in raised center block, plain end blocks on reeded symmetrical pilasters, hexagonal tile hearth; windows - four nine-over-nine double-hung sash.

2. Second floor:

- a. Stair hall: floor - 5 1/2" wide wooden floor boards running in an east-west direction; chair rail - 2' 11 1/4" to top of chair rail; doors - all four doors contain six raised panels with moldings as a part of the rails and stiles - architrave trim is asymmetrical like on first floor.
- b. Northwest bath: floor - asphalt tile; walls and ceiling - plaster; windows - two nine-over-nine double-hung sash.
- c. Northeast bath: floor: asphalt tile; base - 5" high wooden baseboard; chair rail - 2' 11" to top of 6 1/2" high wooden chair rail; walls and ceiling - plaster; fireplace - plastered over; doors - both doors contain six raised panels with moldings as a part of the rails and stiles; windows - both are nine-over-nine double-hung sash.
- d. Southeast chamber: floor - 5" wide wooden floor boards running in an east-west direction; base - 6" high wooden baseboard; chair rail - 2' 9 1/4" to top of 6 1/2" high wooden chair rail; walls - wallpaper over plaster; ceiling - plaster; fireplace - 4' to top of mantel shelf, plain frieze, coal grate; windows - both are nine-over-nine double-hung sash.
- e. Southwest master bedroom: floor - new diagonal wooden floor boards; base - 10" high wooden base; walls - wallpaper over plaster; ceiling - plaster; fireplace - 4' 6 1/2" to top of mantel shelf, plain frieze, dentils in cornice, paneled end blocks, opening closed, brick hearth; windows - both are nine-over-nine double-hung sash.
- f. Passage and hyphen: floor - 2 1/2" wide wooden floor boards running in an east-west direction.
- g. 1832 addition: floor - 6 1/2" - 8 1/2" random width wooden floor boards running in an east-west direction.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Situated on the southern end of Green Mountain, Old Woodville faces northeast. The present Mrs. VanClief has restored the semi-formal gardens to the south with the help of her long-time gardener, Edgar Page. To the northwest, Japanese gardens were completed

in 1966 with the help of gardener William Slosson. Nearby are famous horse stables, started in 1891 by the Forsythe family and completed in 1933 by the VanClief family on Nydrie Farm. Yearlings sold from the farm were valued at nearly \$5,000,000 over a ten-year period. Today, holdings involve a land area of about 4000 acres, 600 head of cattle, and housing for seven families.

2. Outbuildings: There are a couple pyramidal outbuildings, a cottage, and a large dog house which resembles a cottage.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Albemarle County Deed Books and Will Books

Coles, John, II. Account Books. #9533 Alderman Manuscripts, University of Virginia, 1745-1808.

Coles, William B. The Coles Family in Virginia, 1931.

Dolan, Thomas. Measured drawings of Old Woodville for HABS (under the direction of K. Edward Lay), 1983.

Dudley, Margee and Osbourne Mackie. Staunton and James River Turnpike Survey (under the direction of K. Edward Lay), 1980.

Daily Progress newspaper article on Old Woodville, 17 April 1973.

Rawlings, Mary. Antebellum Albemarle, 1935.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation was compiled in January 1984 by K. Edward Lay, professor of architecture at the University of Virginia, in preparation for publication of the book A Virginia Family and its Plantation Houses (University Press of Virginia, 1987). The information was edited and prepared for transmittal to the Library of Congress in March 1988 by Holly K. Chamberlain, HABS historian.